

FDA NEWS RELEASE

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FDA hurricane preparedness checklist

Agency urges consumers to ensure safety of food, water, medical supplies

The FDA reminds consumers to take precautions for storing water and ensuring the safety of their food and medical supplies for themselves and their pets during and after this week's expected hurricane-related rain, possible flooding and power outages.

The agency also reminds consumers that it is important to have a plan in place for emergency medication and medical supplies for both people and animals. This is especially true for those with health concerns, particularly if the power goes out.

In general, FDA encourages consumers to:

Food

- Do not eat any food that may have come into contact with flood water. **If in doubt, throw it out.**
- Do not eat food packed in plastic, paper, cardboard, cloth and similar containers that have been water-damaged.
- Discard food and beverage containers with screw-caps, snap lids, crimped caps (soda bottles), twist caps, flip tops and home canned foods, if they have come in contact with flood water. These containers cannot be disinfected.
- Check to ensure that the freezer temperature is at or below **0 °F** and the refrigerator is at or below **40 °F**.
- Keep the **refrigerator and freezer doors closed** as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.
- For more information, see [Hurricanes and Floods](#) and [Key Tips for Consumers About Food and Water Safety](#)

Water

- Area health departments will determine whether local tap water can be used for drinking. If the water cannot be used or is questionable, and bottled water is not available, then use the directions in the next bullet to purify it.
- Boiling water will kill most types of disease-causing organisms that may be present. If the water is cloudy, filter it through clean cloths or allow it to settle and draw off the clear water for boiling. Boil the water for **one minute**, let it cool and store it in clean containers with covers.

- For more information, see [Food Safety for Consumers Returning Home After a Hurricane and/or Flooding](#)

Pets

- If you have to leave your home, take your pet with you if at all possible. You are the best person to take care of your pet.
- Pets should be contained in a carrier or on a leash.
- Emergencies can make pets display unexpected or uncharacteristic behaviors. It may take several weeks before your pet's behavior is back to normal.
- Allow your pet plenty of time to rest and get used to new surroundings. Provide familiar toys, if possible.
- For more information see [Taking Care of Pets During a Disaster or Emergency](#)

Drugs Exposed to Water

- For lifesaving drugs exposed to water, when replacements may not be readily available, if the **container** is contaminated but the contents appear unaffected—if the pills are dry—the pills may be used until a replacement can be obtained. However, if the pill is wet it is contaminated and should be discarded.
- Other drug products (pills, oral liquids, drugs for injections, inhalers, skin medications)—even those in their original containers—should be discarded if they have come into contact with flood or contaminated water. In the ideal setting, capsules, tablets, and liquids in drug containers with screw-top caps, snap lids, or droppers, should be discarded if they are contaminated. In addition, medications that have been placed in any alternative storage containers should be discarded if they have come in contact with flood or contaminated water.
- For more information, see [Safe Drug Use After a Natural Disaster](#)

Insulin Storage and Switching Between Products in an Emergency

- As a general rule, insulin loses its potency according to the temperature it is exposed to and length of that exposure. Under emergency conditions, you might still need to use insulin that has been stored above 86 °F. Such extreme temperatures may cause insulin to lose potency, which could result in loss of blood glucose control over time.
- In any case, you should try to keep insulin as cool as possible. Try to keep insulin away from direct heat and out of direct sunlight, but if you are using ice, also avoid freezing the insulin.
- When properly stored insulin becomes available, discard and replace the insulin vials that have been exposed to these extreme conditions.
- For more information see [Information Regarding Insulin Storage and Switching Between Products in an Emergency](#)

Medical Devices

- If you have a "life-supporting" or "life-sustaining" device that depends on electricity, you should contact your healthcare provider for information on how to maintain function in the event of a loss of power.
- Keep your device and supplies clean and dry. If possible, notify your local Public Health Authority to request evacuation prior to adverse weather events.
- For more information, see [FDA Offers Tips about Medical Devices and Hurricane Disasters](#)

Vaccines, Blood, Biologics

- If the power goes out, make note of the time and keep refrigerators and freezers closed as much as possible.
- When the power is restored, if possible, determine the temperature in the refrigerator or freezer before the temperature starts to go back down.
- If the power outage continues, consider removing products from the refrigerator or freezer and packing them in ice or dry ice as appropriate.
- If contact with flood water occurs, the product should be considered contaminated and should not be used.
- For more information, see [Impact of Severe Weather Conditions on Biological Products](#)

Find [more information](#) for consumers and industry on all FDA-regulated products

For more hurricane preparedness information: [Hurricanes](#)